

Olympic design drawing cheers from the stands

By Roger Boye

Government artists finally have developed a design for the 1984 Olympic gold coin that's winning critical acclaim.

Their latest rendition of two runners holding an Olympic torch has garnered praise from Treasury Sec. Donald Regan and the federal Fine Arts Commission. The secretary's support means that engravers can begin to prepare dies for use next year in striking the country's first \$10 gold piece since 1933.

The original design for the coin's "head's side" looked so amateurish that a congressman dubbed it "Dick and Jane jogging." That version, released last autumn, had the two athletes running straight ahead, their feet seemingly tripping over the coin's date.

In the final draft, artists made the runners move to the right, their arms and legs depicted in proper relative motion. Other parts of the design, including Olympic symbols and the lettering, also were revamped.

Although bureaucrats have not yet released official pictures of both sides of the final version, a Treasury Department executive told Numismatic News that the new design is a drastic improvement, with the athletes looking "much more like runners now." An eagle is depicted on the tail's side.

Meanwhile, government workers in San Francisco have begun mailing the 1983 Olympic silver dollars to buyers. Production of the coin, portraying a discus thrower, is nearly three months behind schedule because of technical problems at the mint.

Artists still are working on revisions for the 1984 silver dollar design, the third and last coin honoring the 1984 summer Olympics in Los Angeles. The widely debunked preliminary sketch shows a sculpture in front of the Los Angeles Coliseum.

All three Olympic coins are made for sale to collectors; none will be put into circulation. For ordering information, write to Bureau of the Mint, P.O. Box 6766, San Francisco, Calif. 94101.

• Uncle Sam's decision last year to suspend production of uncirculated coin sets prompted an outcry from many hobbyists.

Collectors' complaints apparently were not made in vain. Late last month, the U.S. House approved legislation that includes a provision requiring the mint to issue sets of uncirculated coins during the government's 1984 fiscal year, as well as proof sets.

If the bill passes without change in the Senate and is signed by the President, sales of sets could resume as early as next October. The mint sold uncirculated coin sets in 1981, charging \$11 for coins with a face value of \$4.82.